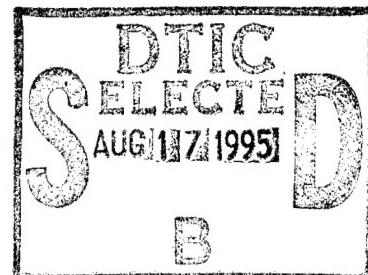


# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA



## THESIS

THE NORTH KOREAN SPECIAL PURPOSE FORCES  
AN ASSESSMENT OF THE THREAT

by

Michael S. Durtschi

March 1995

Thesis Advisor:

James J. Wirtz

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This study provides an empirical assessment of the capabilities of the North Korean Special Purpose Forces and the threat they pose to the interests of both South Korea and the United States. It develops two possible campaign models, based on two prominent schools of thought on the use of special operations forces (SOF), autonomous use, or integration with general purpose forces. This thesis then compares the capabilities of the North Korean Special Purpose Forces to the alternate campaign models to predict their possible uses in the event of a second Korean War.

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THE NORTH KOREAN SPECIAL PURPOSE FORCES  
AN ASSESSMENT OF THE THREAT  
by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Relative to other militaries, North Korea has an extremely large contingent of Special Purpose Forces. Estimates of its size go as high as 100,000 men. These Special Forces, and the doctrine governing their use, are among the least-understood aspects of the North Korean military. Understanding the threat they pose, either in war or peacetime, on and off the Korean peninsula, is very important to the American and South Korean military planners.

The purpose of this thesis is to assess the threat that the North Korean Special Forces pose, and to explore how this threat might be deterred or countered. This thesis will answer three general questions. First, in the event of a second Korean War, what will the special forces campaign look like? Second, how could one deter North Korea's use of this capability and, if that fails, can the threat be countered? Finally, what conclusions can be drawn from the North Korean case about the future use of special operations forces in general.

This study provides an empirical assessment of the capabilities of the North Korean Special Purpose Forces and the threat they pose to the interests of both the Republic of Korea and the United States. It develops two possible campaign models, based on two prominent schools of thought on the use of special operations forces (SOF), autonomous use, or integration with general purpose forces. The "autonomist" model is a counter-

leadership campaign developed from the recipe for a coup d'etat found in Edward Luttwak's book "Coup d'etat". The "integrationist" model is an interdiction campaign developed from Soviet Spetsnaz doctrine. This thesis then compares the capabilities of the North Korean Special Purpose Forces to the alternate campaign models to predict their possible uses in the event of a second Korean War.

Finally, the study addresses how the Republic of Korea and the United States may deter or counter the threat these forces pose. It also discusses what conclusions may be drawn from this study about the future use of special operations forces in general.

This thesis evaluates the capabilities and past record of these special purpose forces to show that they were designed to operate either autonomously or integrated into conventional operations. However, political, military, and economic factors point toward North Korea using these special purpose forces generally along the lines of the "integrationist" campaign and not in a "autonomist" campaign.

If the North decides to invade South Korea again, the strategy of the North Korean army is to fight a two-front war aimed at sweeping the peninsula in just 5-7 days. The Special Purpose Forces play a significant role in this plan. These forces would be used primarily to provide intelligence and create a second front in the South's rear area, in a campaign based on the "integrationist" model. Their operations would commence

prior to hostilities with special reconnaissance and sabotage missions. Once hostilities commenced, these forces would be infiltrated in large numbers by air, land, and sea to conduct a wide range of special reconnaissance and direct action missions.

Conventional deterrence theory works on simple cost/benefit analysis: If the cost plus the risk is greater than the expected benefit, then deterrence is successful (if  $C + R > B$ , then peace). If the cost plus the risk is less than the expected benefit, then deterrence will fail (if  $C + R < B$ , then conflict). To further refine this equation we add the probability of the different outcomes. The probability of failing and therefore enduring the costs is inversely proportional to the probability of achieving the desired benefit. Therefore, if  $(P)(C + R) > (B)(1-P)$  then peace, and if  $(P)(C + R) < (B)(1-P)$ , then conflict.

This thesis suggests that the challenge to the U.S. and South Korea is to raise the costs and risks potential well above the benefits for North Korea, or to reduce the probability that the North will attain its desired result. The South Korean response to this threat is simply to prepare for self defense. A defense that is strong enough to deny the enemy's success will deter him.

This thesis outlines possible U.S responses to this threat to maintain a credible deterrent, demonstrate our resolve, and yet remain unprovocative. It suggests the possible succession crisis in the North may be an opportunity to open better channels of communications with North Korea to facilitate diplomacy.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Since the Korean War armistice was signed in 1953, the North Koreans have prepared for another war. At the same time, they have pursued alternative ways to continue the battle. Time and again, the late Kim Il Sung claimed to be the head of the only legitimate Korean government. He said that it was his duty to reunify the Korean peninsula. He went so far as to proclaim 1995 as the "year of national reunification" and 1993 as the "year of final preparation for war."<sup>1</sup> Since Kim Il Sung's death, his son Kim Jong Il has pledged to carry on his father's vision. It is as yet uncertain how he intends to do this and if he will be able to reunify the Korean peninsula by force.

Along with these provocative goals, North Korea has substantial military forces. The North Korean military consists of an offensive-oriented army of over 1 million, a navy of 60,000 (with over 500 naval vessels) and an Air Force of 80,000 (with over 800 jet combat aircraft). This gives them the fifth largest military in the world.<sup>2</sup> It is estimated that approximately 100,000 of these are Special Forces troops, 20,000 of which are capable of infiltrating by air or sea simultaneously.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Defense White Paper, 1993-1994, (Seoul, Korea: The Ministry of National Defense, The Republic of Korea, 1994), p. 54

<sup>2</sup>Defense Intelligence Agency, North Korea, The Foundations of Military Strength, (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office, 1991) p. iii

<sup>3</sup>Defense White Paper, p. 62

It must be noted that most of North Korea's military equipment is old. The tanks are mostly 1950s era Warsaw pact models.<sup>4</sup> The majority of their 800 jet aircraft are 1950s and 1960s vintage Chinese and Soviet technology.<sup>5</sup> Finally, their 500 naval vessels are nearly all small patrol craft suitable only for coastal operations and not for major naval battles.<sup>6</sup> Still, the very size of their military makes it a formidable threat.

These Special Forces and the doctrine governing their use are some of the least-understood aspects of the North Korean military. Their numbers make them one of the largest groups of specially trained soldiers in the world. Understanding the threat they pose both during wartime and peacetime, on and off the Korean peninsula, is very important to the U.S. and South Korean military planners. The U.S. has long standing treaty obligations with South Korea under the Korean-American Mutual Defense Treaty signed in 1953.<sup>7</sup>

North Korean forces have conducted special operations against the Republic of Korea since the armistice ending the Korean War in 1953. These operations cross the spectrum of potential unconventional military activities, from guerilla

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<sup>4</sup>Defense Intelligence Agency, p.40

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 47

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 44

<sup>7</sup>Frederica M. Bunge, editor, South Korea: A Country Study, (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1982), p. 192

warfare to assassination attempts on the South Korean president. The operations have demonstrated a wide range of special operations capabilities: clandestine infiltration techniques; direct action operations; sabotage; and training of insurgency forces and terrorists.

The overall size of the North Korean military gives them a significant numerical advantage over South Korea. However, twenty years of rapid economic growth has enabled the south to surpass the north technologically. South Korean defense expenditures grew from US\$ 411 million in 1970 to over US\$ 10 billion in 1990.<sup>8</sup> The resulting rapid modernization of the South Korean military far outpaced anything North Korea could afford.

South Korea chose to balance against the power of the North by qualitative rather than quantitative means. Traditional balance of power theory suggests that the highest risk of conflict is when the gap between the relative power of two countries is wide.<sup>9</sup> However, power transition theory argues that war is most likely when a declining power nears the capabilities of a rising power or as this window of opportunity for the declining power closes.<sup>10</sup> If power transition theory is right, North Korea's window of opportunity for attack is rapidly closing

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<sup>8</sup>Andrea Matles Savada and William Shaw, editors, South Korea: A Country Study, (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1990), p. 293

<sup>9</sup>Inis Claude, "The Balance of Power Revisited," Review of International Studies, 15: 77-85 (Great Britain, 1989), p. 79

<sup>10</sup>Robert Gilpin, War and Change in World Politics, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), Pp. 44-49

or may already be closed. Thus, there exists a significant potential for conflict on the Korean peninsula. Given North Korea's decline and South Korea's rise in power, the future prospects do not seem too promising for the North to be able to compete with the South, possibly encouraging the former to consider preventative war options.

The purpose of this thesis is to assess the threat that the North Korean Special Forces pose and to explore how this threat might be deterred or countered. This thesis will answer three general questions. First, in the event of a second Korean War, what will the Special Forces Campaign look like? Second, how do we deter North Korea's use of this capability and, if that fails, how do we counter this threat? Finally, what conclusions can be drawn about the future use of Special Operations Forces in general from the North Korean case.

Chapter II is an empirical assessment of the capabilities of the North Korean Special Purpose Forces and the threat they pose to the interests of both the Republic of Korea and the United States. To assess their capabilities, this chapter examines the pattern of Special Operations carried out by the North Koreans.

Chapter III develops two possible campaign models based on two accepted schools of thought on the use of special operations forces (SOF), autonomous use or integration with general purpose forces. There are two basic theories of the use of SOF. The autonomous theory says SOF should be used for missions the General Purpose Forces (GPF) cannot do. SOF operations are

separate and distinct from those of the GPF. The integration theory calls for SOF to be used in conjunction with GPF to improve the performance of the GPF.

The "autonomist" model is based on the autonomous use of special operations to achieve strategic goals. It outlines a counter-leadership campaign developed from the recipe for a coup d'etat found in Edward Luttwak's book "Coup d'etat".<sup>11</sup> Luttwak's book is a practical handbook for the strategy, planning and execution of a coup d'etat. It outlines the critical targets necessary to pull off a coup. The strategy and targets in this book are the basis for the potential unconventional warfare campaign that will be used to assess North Korean special operations capabilities and intentions.

The "integrationist" model illustrates the integration of these special purpose forces in support of the general purpose forces on the operational level. It is an interdiction campaign developed from Soviet Spetsnaz doctrine. This doctrine is taken primarily from two books: "Inside Spetsnaz" by Major William H. Burgess III and "Special Operations and National Purpose" by Ross S. Kelly.

These models represent two separate theories. It is also possible that the probable campaign would be some hybrid of these two models.

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<sup>11</sup>Edward Luttwak, Coup D'etat, A Practical Handbook, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979)

Chapter IV compares the capabilities of the North Korean Special Purpose Forces to the alternate campaign models to predict a possible campaign in the event of a second Korean War. This addresses the first question, what would a Special Forces campaign look like?

The other two questions are answered in the final chapter. This chapter addresses how the Republic of Korea and the United States may deter or counter the threat these forces pose. It also discusses what conclusions may be drawn from this study about the future use of special operations forces in general.

## II. THE THREAT

### A. BACKGROUND

The foundations of the North Korean military are rooted firmly in unconventional warfare. Kim Il Sung developed the Korean Peoples Army from his experience in guerilla warfare against the Japanese. In 1948, two years before the invasion that kicked off the Korean War, guerrillas from the north infiltrated into the mountainous region of South Korea. The forces were able to keep four of South Korea's nine divisions occupied.<sup>12</sup> These unconventional operations set the stage for the June 1950 conventional invasion of South Korea. Only intervention by the United States and United Nations forces saved the South.

Even before the ceasefire was signed in 1953 ending the fighting in the Korean War, the North began shifting from an open conventional conflict back to unconventional warfare.<sup>13</sup> These covert operations are still going on today and are directed against South Korea and U.S. interests on the peninsula and throughout the world. This mirrors with the development of the doctrine for the Korean Peoples Army of North Korea. (KPA). Their doctrine is a peculiar mixture of Maoist principles of protracted

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<sup>12</sup>David Rees, editor, The Korean War: History and Tactics, (New York: Crescent Books, 1963), Pp. 11-13

<sup>13</sup>Joseph S. Bermudez, Jr., "North Korean Intelligence Agencies and Infiltration Operations", Jane's Intelligence Review, June 1991, p. 269

guerrilla warfare and heavy Soviet-style armored formations used in a blitzkrieg fashion.

A constant thread throughout the post war-period has been the North Korean theory of "three revolutionary forces." A strategy following this theory calls for first, a dynamic and powerful revolutionary base in North Korea. Second, it calls for the establishment and support of a revolutionary force in South Korea. Finally, this strategy aims to establish a support relationship with international revolutionary forces.<sup>14</sup>

To carry out this unconventional warfare strategy, the North attempted to infiltrate small teams and individuals across the demilitarized zone (DMZ) with the aim of recruiting agents and establishing subversive cells. Throughout the 1950s and into the early 1960s, the North Koreans continued this campaign. These teams also performed espionage, reconnaissance, and other intelligence gathering functions. For many reasons this campaign failed to gain any real support in South Korea. It was not successful in its goal of establishing a revolutionary force in South Korea. This failure prompted a Kim Il Sung to raise the stakes and embark on a more aggressive and violent campaign designed to create what he called "the Peoples War within the Republic of Korea."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Major Douglas S. Watson, "North Korean Special-Purpose Forces", Special Warfare, October 1992, p. 36

<sup>15</sup>Bermudez, p. 279

In essence this became an-all out guerrilla war or as we now call it a low intensity conflict. Two elite army units under the control of the Liaison Department of the Korean Workers Party, conducted this intense campaign. They were the 124th Army Unit and the 283rd Army Unit. Their operations reached a level never fully appreciated by the United States. The operation peaked with an assassination attempt on the President of South Korea, Park Chung Hee, in January 1968 and with large scale commando raids on the east coast in October 1968.<sup>16</sup>

This campaign also failed to generate Kim Il Sung's "People's War." Again, there were many reasons for this failure. The biggest of which was that the North Koreans failed to understand the situation in the South. Many South Koreans may not have agreed totally with their government, but the average citizen was anti-communist and opposed to Kim Il Sung. South Koreans held this opinion for three reasons. First, the people of South Korea had vivid memories of the war and remembered it was Kim Il Sung and the communists who invaded in 1950. Second, the south was enjoying a growing level of prosperity that was not matched in the north. Finally, any support these guerrilla movements may have had was quickly destroyed by the harsh treatment handed out by the 124th and the 283rd Army Units. For example, between October 30th and November 2nd, 1968, eight groups of 15 North Korean guerrillas from the 124th landed at nearly the same spot along the south coast. Their mission was to

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<sup>16</sup>Bermudez, p. 169

occupy and "revolutionize" small mountain villages. The intruders attempted to indoctrinate villagers and distribute counterfeit South Korean currency. They ruled with fear and did not hesitate to kill villagers obedient to the government, labeling them as turncoats and reactionaries.<sup>17</sup> Their failure led to the subsequent disbanding of both of these units.

The failure of these two campaigns led to the adoption of a less violent strategy aimed at the long term infiltration and subversion of the Republic of Korea. This new campaign continues. There are a few differences between this campaign and the effort to instigate a "peoples war." First, it is focused on the long term and therefore is more deliberate. Second, this campaign relies on specialized seaborne infiltration units and landing craft because of the South Korean and U.S. fortification of the DMZ. Finally, this campaign is combined with a worldwide diplomatic and intelligence effort targeting U.S. and South Korean interests while simultaneously attempting to strengthen the North Korean claim to leadership of the entire peninsula.

#### **B. ORGANIZATION AND CHAIN OF COMMAND**

The exact chain of command for the North Korean Special Forces is unclear. Available information suggests a well-organized and equipped force that is hampered by multiple overlapping chains of command. Some of this confusion was

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<sup>17</sup>The White Paper on the South/North Dialogue in Korea, (Seoul, Korea: National Unification Board, Republic of Korea, 1982)

cleared up with the revision of the socialist constitution of North Korea in 1992.<sup>18</sup>

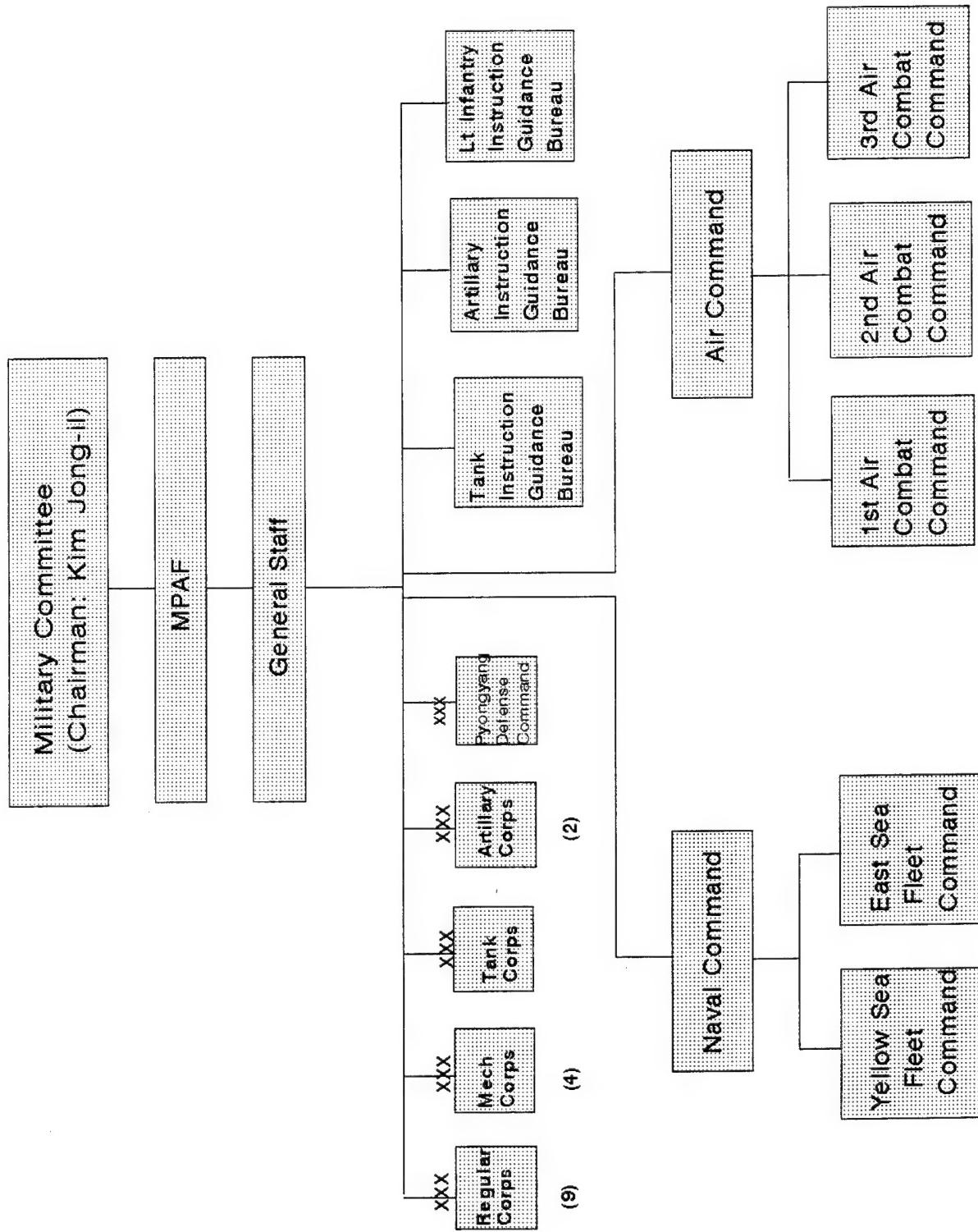
The revision of the constitution established a separate Defense Committee in the Korean Workers Party. The Defense Committee exercises direct control of the Ministry of the People's Armed Forces (MPAF), the core of the North Korean military structure. General policy, direction and strategic planning are formulated at the Defense Committee level and routed through the MPAF to the General Staff. Operational command flows from the General Staff through its various bureaus and command headquarters, to the operational units (see Figure 1).<sup>19</sup> The Special Forces or as they are also called, Special Purpose Forces, fall under the control of the Light Infantry Instruction Guidance Bureau. Within the armed forces, the VIII Special Purpose Corps provide all special-purpose units with administrative and technical support. It also exercises peacetime control of all airborne light-infantry brigades, amphibious light-infantry brigades and those reconnaissance and light-infantry brigades not located within the forward corps areas. During peacetime, the control of these forward units falls under the area commands where they are stationed. However, during wartime, control of all these Special Forces units reverts back to the VIII Special Purpose Corps.

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<sup>18</sup>Defense White Paper, Pp. 56-57

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 58

**North Korean Military Command**  
**Figure 1**



The confusion about overlapping control occurs because additional administrative and technical support comes in varying degrees from the National Intelligence Committee, Cabinet Intelligence Committee, KWP-Liason Department and the General Staff Reconnaissance Bureau. Additionally these units or elements of them will be subordinated to other headquarters for special missions.

At the very top, the control of all the Special Forces and all the armed forces falls into the hands of Kim Jong-Il. He exercises this control as Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Party.

The size of the North Korean Special Forces is generally held to be around 100,000 and accounts for 16% of the Korean People's Army.<sup>20</sup> Figures vary, depending on the source, from 22 light infantry brigades and 7 separate battalions<sup>21</sup> to 27 light infantry brigades, 35 divisional battalions and 5 combined arms brigades.<sup>22</sup>

The units are deployed throughout North Korea and organized into four general groupings: Brigades temporarily subordinate to the forward corps along the DMZ; Brigades directly subordinate to VIII Special Purpose Corps; Divisional light infantry battalions organic to each of the 35 infantry and mechanized infantry

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 59

<sup>21</sup>Defense Intelligence Agency, p. 51

<sup>22</sup>Watson, p. 38

divisions; and the combined arms brigades subordinate directly to the General Staff.<sup>23</sup>

North Korea classifies its special operations units as reconnaissance, light-infantry and sniper. Reconnaissance and sniper elements operate in small team-sized units, while light infantry conduct combat operations similar to U.S. Rangers in company- and battalion-size elements. There are four reconnaissance brigades specially trained to conduct covert and overt land sea and air operations. These brigades are considered the elite of the Special Purpose Forces. Each of them has a direct action unit that is employed for most covert operations. Kidnapping, hijacking, assassination, intelligence gathering, and special operations beyond the Korean peninsula are all part of the reconnaissance brigade's mission.<sup>24</sup> These units carry out state terrorism for North Korea.<sup>25</sup>

Additionally, nearly one quarter of the North Korean naval vessels are amphibious craft developed for the infiltration of these Special Purpose Forces. These craft range from semi-submersibles to the modern hovercraft. This represents a significant priority for the infiltration of these special operations forces.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 38

<sup>24</sup>Ibid, Pp. 38-39

<sup>25</sup>"North Korea: Exporting Terrorism", Backgrounder, February, 1988, p. 2

<sup>26</sup>Bermudez, p. 275

In open sources, there is nothing that points to a unified command or naval and air force SOF structures that link the these special purpose forces with the necessary infiltration platforms in the North Korean Navy and Air Force. However, some sort of structure is implied by the fact that one quarter of the navy and a significant portion of the air force is used for infiltration of these forces.

#### C. CAPABILITIES AND MISSIONS

North Korea's Special Purpose Forces all possess certain ranger/commando or special forces-type capabilities. The light infantry are roughly similar to U.S. Ranger units. The reconnaissance and sniper elements are roughly similar to U.S. Special Forces. All these Special Purpose Forces are comparable to the former Soviet Spetsnaz units. It is likely that much of the training and equipment for these Special Purpose Forces was patterned after the Spetsnaz.<sup>27</sup>

Their training for all these forces is primarily focused on operations behind enemy lines. Emphasis is placed on the use initiative and political activities in South Korea both for war and during peacetime. This training includes martial arts, demolitions, rigorous physical conditioning, mountain climbing,

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<sup>27</sup>Capt. Kenneth D. Denbow, Cdr. Thomas W. Finie, Col Jon M. Samucle, The North Korean Unconventional Warfare Threat to Planned ROK Mobilization and ROK and US Lines of Communication, (Washington D.C., The Industrial College of the Armed Forces, April 1984), p. 13

map reading, swimming, parachuting, amphibious operations and even suicide attacks against buildings and military equipment.<sup>28</sup>

This training gets them ready for their five basic missions: conducting reconnaissance, performing combat operations in concert with conventional forces, establishing a second front in the enemy's rear area, countering the South's special operations in their own rear area, and maintaining internal security.<sup>29</sup> These missions give most of these forces operational peacetime tasks as well as wartime missions.

The first mission, reconnaissance, is conducted during peacetime to locate and/or identify critical targets in the enemy's rear area. It is conducted during wartime mainly in support of conventional operations. Conducting combat operations with conventional forces is done in a variety of ways. Small team-sized elements can conduct sabotage and interdiction of lines of communication, logistics systems and military facilities. These small elements are trained to disrupt and destroy key enemy assets such as command and control, communications, or nuclear and chemical assets.

The third mission, establishing a second front in the enemy's rear area is both a peacetime and wartime mission. In peacetime, it is focused on the establishment of a revolutionary force in South Korea. This is consistent with the aforementioned theory of the three revolutionary forces. These Special Purpose

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<sup>28</sup>Watson, p. 37

<sup>29</sup>Defense Intelligence Agency, p. 51

Forces conduct unconventional-warfare operations in a covert manner in an attempt to build this revolutionary force. In wartime, larger elements are infiltrated by air, land or sea to interdict reinforcements, seize or destroy major targets and to divert the enemy's power from the main battle area.

There is less in the literature about countering the South's special operations and internal security. It seems to make sense to counter enemy special operations with forces similarly trained. In reality, the North's use of these forces to counter enemy special operations in their own rear area is a misapplication of these forces, which then become unavailable for offensive operations. The North Korean general purpose forces working with the over five million homeland reserve forces are more than adequate to counter the South's special operations threat.<sup>30</sup> The reason for the last mission, internal security, is that these forces are considered more reliable due to better screening and more political indoctrination.

Most of these five basic missions depend on the capability to infiltrate into the enemy's rear area. These forces are all trained in varying degrees to infiltrate by land, sea, or from the air. The land infiltration capability is best evidenced by the extensive tunnel system believed to be dug under the DMZ. Since 1974, four tunnels have been found. It is estimated that there are an additional 20 more.<sup>31</sup> Some of these tunnels are

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 55

<sup>31</sup>Defense White Paper, p. 62

large enough to drive vehicles through. This makes them high speed avenues of approach for larger light infantry units to infiltrate in the event of war. There may be countless smaller tunnels that could be used to infiltrate reconnaissance teams or smaller attack teams. Individual agents and small reconnaissance teams may also infiltrate on foot through the DMZ or by swimming the Han or Injin rivers. This is a very risky operation because they usually must travel at night. They must also avoid ambush, guard posts, patrols, obstacles, mine fields, villages and main roads.

Seaborne infiltration capabilities are extensive. Since South Korean and U.S. forces fortified the DMZ in the early 1970s, the North Koreans have turned to seaborne infiltration as their primary means of entering South Korea during peacetime. They have designed and built a wide variety of craft to facilitate seaborne infiltration. These craft range from mini-submarines to over 100 high-speed hovercraft, each capable of carrying platoon-sized forces for a surprise attack. They have semi-submersibles and infiltration craft that look like legitimate fishing trawlers. The KWP Central Committee also exercises control of at least eight ocean going cargo ships that can act as a "mother ship" for infiltration operations in South Korea, Japan, and other international operations. One such ship, the Tong Gon Ae Guk-Ho, transported a Reconnaissance Brigade team

to Rangoon, Burma in 1983 for an assassination attempt on South Korean President Chun Doo Hwan.<sup>32</sup>

The North has long made attempts to infiltrate agents and reconnaissance teams from these Special Purpose Forces into South Korea and Japan. Some examples of this infiltration activity are the 1965 capture of a mini-sub following its grounding on a mud flat at the confluence of the Injin and the Han rivers, the capture of a high speed infiltration craft after a high-speed chase off the northeast coast of South Korea in July 1979, the capture of a high-speed semi-submersible infiltration craft on the beach at Miji-ri in December 1980, and as recently as October 1990, the wreckage of a North Korean infiltration craft washed ashore on the coast of Japan. These efforts are continuing despite recent reunification talks and North Korea's attempt to improve relations with Japan.<sup>33</sup> Seaborne infiltration obviously poses a threat that includes both peacetime and wartime operations.

The third method of infiltration is more limited to wartime applications. Airborne infiltration, because of the need to violate enemy airspace is usually limited to times of conflict. The north possesses at least eight airborne light-infantry brigades that are part of their Special Purpose Forces. These airborne forces are supported by the North Korean Air Force's 250 AN 2/Colt aircraft. Some may think that these antiquated 1940s

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<sup>32</sup>Bermudez, p. 272

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., Pp. 269-275

era aircraft have no place on the modern battlefield. However, their slow cruising speed of 124 mph makes them particularly suitable for flying through mountain passes and down valleys to pass under the radar in the rugged mountainous terrain that is predominate in the central region of Korea. On the other hand, this slow speed makes them very vulnerable once they are detected. This airborne capability was enhanced significantly in 1984 by the clandestine acquisition of 80+ U.S. made Hughes 500 C and D model helicopters. They were smuggled into North Korea by a West German sales representative. Until this delivery, the North Koreans had only a very limited number of Soviet made MI-4/Hound and MI-/Hip helicopters in their inventory.<sup>34</sup>

Additionally, North Korean Special Purpose Forces are engaged in the conduct of terrorism, as well as the training of terrorists in camps within North Korea and abroad. There is a long history of the use of terror tactics by the North Koreans. In 1968, 31 North Korean commandos attacked the Blue House, the presidential compound near Seoul, in an attempt to assassinate the South Korean president. In another incident, a bomb was placed by three terrorists later identified as a major and two captains in the North Korean Special Purpose Forces, in Rangoon, Burma. It was another attempt to assassinate a South Korean president. Another example of the North's use of terrorism is

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<sup>34</sup>G. Jacobs, "North Korea Looks South: Unconventional Warfare Forces", Asian Defense Journal, December 1985, pp. 10-23

the bombing of a Korean Airlines Flight 858 killing 115 passengers and crew in 1987.<sup>35</sup>

These examples are only a sample of the terrorist acts that can be attributed to the North Koreans. They suggest, not just state sponsorship of terrorism like Libya and the former Soviet Union, but state-directed terrorism. State sponsorship of terrorism involves supporting others so they can carry out terrorist acts that may be in the sponsor's interests. State-directed terrorism is the direct control of the terrorists by a state or a state conducting terrorist acts with their own forces, as in North Korea's case. North Korea may very well be the first true terrorist state. The government of North Korea appears to be committed to the use of terrorism as an acceptable means of pursuing national policy. This national policy is rooted in Kim Il Sung's theory of three revolutions and Article 16 of the North Korean constitution that calls for the unity with "all the people of the world opposed to imperialism" and the support of the "struggle for national liberation and international revolution."<sup>36</sup>

Evidence indicates that an estimated 7000 North Korean Special Purpose Forces have traveled to 47 countries to train terrorists and guerrillas and that an additional 5000 terrorists from 25 countries have received training in camps inside North Korea. There is also evidence to suggest that North Koreans are

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<sup>35</sup>Watson, p. 38

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 39

allied with such groups as Italy's Red Brigades, Germany's Red Army Faction, the Japanese Red Army and the Palestine Liberation Organization.<sup>37</sup>

#### D. OPERATIONS

The operations of these special purpose forces cover a wide spectrum, from terrorism to guerrilla warfare. There have been at least five assassination attempts on South Korean presidents by the North, and since 1965 these have been more than 70 incidents on the DMZ and over 40 South Korean fishing boats were seized. These operations also include kidnapping, bombings, murder, and other terror tactics.

The research for this thesis has revealed few details of North Korean special operations prior to 1965. However, sources point out the types of operations North Korean forces carried out from 1953 to 1965. There is much more detailed data for North Korean provocation since 1965. The Appendix is a chronology of North Korean operations from 1965 through 1992 compiled from multiple sources.

These operations can be separated into three phases. These phases are not totally distinct from each other. They tend to blend together over time, however there seems to be three distinct strategies. First, from before the armistice was signed until the mid-seventies, North Korean special purpose forces carried out a guerrilla campaign in an attempt to stimulate and organize a revolutionary force in South Korea. Second, beginning

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid, p. 39

with an assassination attempt, the Blue House raid in 1968 through the eighties, the strategy shifted to terror tactics and attempts to decapitate the South Korean government. Finally, from the late eighties through the present, the operations have shifted to a less violent strategy of infiltration through a third country and subversion from within the South Korean society.



### **III. CAMPAIGN MODELS**

#### **A. THE "AUTONOMIST" OR COUNTER-LEADERSHIP MODEL**

This model is developed on the hypothesis that a Counter-leadership campaign aimed at South Korea would look very much like a coup d'etat. The strategy and execution of this counter-leadership campaign may be the same up to the point of seizing power. Here lies the major difference between a coup and this "autonomist" model. The goal of a coup d'etat is to seize power, while the goal of a counter-leadership campaign is to bring down the existing regime. The reason behind this sort of campaign may be to create a power vacuum and install a leadership from within the present system more favorable to one's interests or it may be to destroy a country's leadership to facilitate an invasion. Either way, the strategy of a coup or a counter-leadership campaign remains very similar.

##### **1. Strategy**

Overthrowing a government is not easy. Most all governments are protected by professional security forces (armed forces, police, security agencies) and are supported by a whole range of political forces. Therefore, the strategy to overthrow a government must aim to decapitate the existing leadership, neutralize security forces, and pacify political forces.<sup>38</sup>

##### **a. Decapitation**

Immediate political power is always concentrated in the country's government. The strategy for a counter-leadership

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<sup>38</sup>Luttwak, p. 57

campaign or coup must address how to eliminate or isolate this formal political power. This is but the tip of the iceberg. It may appear that those who carry out a coup shatter a powerful structure merely by seizing a few buildings, arresting or killing of a few political figures and liberating the radio station. In reality, their primary achievement has gone unnoticed. The real achievement is the process by which the security forces are neutralized and the political forces are at least pacified temporarily.<sup>39</sup>

**b. Neutralize Security Forces**

Edward Luttwak points out that one common feature of modern states is extensive and diversified security systems. In nearly every state, the security system consists of the armed forces, the police, and some form of intelligence organization. South Korea is no exception. It has a modern powerful military, the Korean National Police and the Agency for National Security Planning (ANSP).<sup>40</sup>

Because of their capability for direct intervention, these security forces must be neutralized before the actual military operation to bring down the government in South Korea takes place. In order for North Korean Special Purpose forces to neutralize these forces, different strategies need to be taken for each.

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., Pp. 57-58

<sup>40</sup>Savada and Shaw, p. 310

(1) Military. The increase in the size of modern uniformed forces and the technological revolution have made modern armies vulnerable to infiltration and recruitment by subversive forces. The modern army is usually too large to be a coherent social unit bound by traditional loyalties. This size and the need for technologically-minded personnel has broken down the traditional barriers that limited recruitment to particular social groups.<sup>41</sup>

This vulnerability gives a subversive force (North Korean special purpose forces) the opportunity to infiltrate the system and turn a few of the component units into active participants of the coup, while neutralizing the others. In this way, the small subversive element may overthrow a government before anyone realizes how weak they are.

To carry out this campaign, the subversive forces must evaluate the armed forces of the proposed target state completely. First, these forces must identify the real operational echelon in the various armed forces in the target country. Armies have a formal command structure made up of divisions, brigades, regiments, battalions, companies and platoons, however, the real chain of command may not follow that same structure. For example, in a centralized command and control structure where battalions are controlled directly by the General Headquarters (GHQ), subverting the levels between the battalions and GHQ is a waste of time. On the other hand, in a

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<sup>41</sup>Luttwak, p. 63

de-centralized command structure where almost every echelon is operational, subversion at any level is desirable.<sup>42</sup>

Once the operational level of the command is determined, the next step to identify the forces relevant to the coup or the counter-leadership campaign. Luttwak suggests that the forces relevant to the operation are those whose location and/or equipment enables them to intervene with the operation within 12-24 hours of the actual takeover. This is his estimate of how long it takes to establish control over the machinery of government.<sup>43</sup>

Now, that the subversive forces have identified the nature, composition and the real operational echelon in each relevant unit, they must identify key individuals within those units. These key individuals fall into two categories, the leaders and the technicians. The leaders are usually the operational officers of the relevant units. The task remains to identify key technicians who can affect the operations of the relevant units to prevent their intervention in the coup or counter-leadership campaign. These technicians may be the communications staff that transmits or receives communications between political leaders and the relevant unit, or any other technicians who are necessary for the unit to operate. The cooperation of technicians is sufficient for neutralizing a unit; but, in order to incorporate a unit into an active participant,

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., Pp. 66-68

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 70

the operation will need the active cooperation of a number of the leaders of that unit.

Before the planners go on to approach and persuade these key individuals, they must collect sufficient intelligence to know which are the relevant units, the real command structure and the leaders of relevant units, and the technical structure and relevant technicians in these units.<sup>44</sup>

Once identified these key individuals must be evaluated in terms of their likely reaction to potential recruitment. Luttwak gives us three guides as to the value of a potential recruit: ethnic affiliation, political outlook and career patterns. Ethnic affiliation is relatively easy to assess. Assessing political outlook is somewhat harder and hardest of all is finding out if the recruit is alienated from his superiors. This can be assessed by following his career pattern. This all requires extensive intelligence collection.<sup>45</sup>

Once the approach and persuasion of key individuals begins to give results, the units that can be incorporated as active participants in the overthrow of the government are identified. The focus then turns to neutralizing the rest of the relevant units.

(2) Police. The structure of police in modern societies is diverse. Police forces are shaped by social and political conditions in the country they serve. However, no

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 72

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 80

matter how diverse, they resemble each other in the purposes they serve, the detection and prevention of crime and the maintenance of public order. The maintenance of public order is either carried out by separate para-military element or by concentrating ordinary policemen taken from other duties. The criminal side of police work is carried out by a country-wide network of police stations. This network may or may not be under national command. Often, the police include an intelligence element.<sup>46</sup>

The strategy of the coup must be as diversified as the police system it faces. In South Korea, the police are organized into a national police force, the Korean National Police (KNP). This force is composed of thirteen metropolitan/provincial police bureaus, the combat police (para-military element), the National Maritime Police and an anti-communist unit. Their missions include regular police functions such as law enforcement, criminal investigations, and public safety. In addition to these, the KNP are responsible for the maintenance of public order (riot control, countering demonstrations), coastal security, anti-smuggling operations and even counter-espionage operations with the military. The KNP also conduct "combat operations" against small scale infiltrations attempts, monitor foreign students and other "security" risks, and conduct anticommunist and counter-terrorist

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p.90

operations. Nearly one half of the more than 130,000 man KNP is organized into para-military units.<sup>47</sup>

Luttwak suggests that the only real threat posed by the police is from the para-military forces. He points out that the forces used to carry out criminal police work are not equipped and trained to intervene in a timely manner against armed opponents in a major political crisis.<sup>48</sup>

To neutralize the para-military element of the KNP, the subversive forces must evaluate it thoroughly. The first step is to establish the size, deployment and organization of these para-military forces. Next, the planners of the coup-like campaign will assess the degree of attachment to the present regime of these forces. If the equipment, deployment and mentality of the para-military forces is such to make them an effective intervention force, as in South Korea, they must be dealt with in one of two ways. First, the whole process of infiltration and subversion taken with the military could be repeated or the incorporated military units could be used to isolate the relevant para-military forces.

(3) Security Agencies. The security agencies are probably the smallest organizations involved in the professional defenses of the state. However, they are also the most dangerous. These forces are actively trying to identify and defeat threats to the state. These agencies, whether they belong

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<sup>47</sup>Savada and Shaw, p. 318

<sup>48</sup>Luttwak, Pp. 98-99

to the police, the military or are separate organizations, are difficult to study from the outside and sometimes even unknown to foreigners.<sup>49</sup>

The three main South Korean security agencies are the Agency for National Security Planning (ANSP), the Defense Security Command (DSC), and elements of the KNP. The function of these agencies often overlap. Additionally, they have historically wielded a disproportionate amount of power because of the continued threat from the north. Until recently, these agencies have enjoyed nearly unlimited powers to investigate and detain any person accused of anti-state behavior.<sup>50</sup>

The powers that these security agencies hold dictates that the strategy used to neutralize them be purely defensive, unless the subversive forces have a direct line to one of these agencies. If this is the case, the security agency concerned would provide an ideal cover for subversive activities. Barring such a situation, the strategy will be one of avoiding contact with these agencies and following a few basic rules to minimize any security compromises for the whole operation. These rules include: a) all information be verbal; b) information be communicated on a "need to know" basis only; c) communication links be one way only; and d) no activity be carried out by a core planner that can be carried out by a recruit.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 99

<sup>50</sup>Savada and Shaw,, Pp. 310-323

<sup>51</sup>Luttwak, Pp. 102-103

**c. Neutralize Political Forces.**

As with the security forces, the first step to neutralizing the political forces is conducting a thorough analysis to identify the important forces in the political arena. Immediate political power is concentrated in the formal government of any country, but there are also personalities and groups outside the government that have significant political power. The source of strength is their ability to participate in the formation of governments and their ability to influence political decisions. Political forces can intervene against the coup in two ways: they can rally the masses or loyalist forces against the subversive forces; or they can manipulate technical facilities under their control to oppose the consolidation of power after the actual coup.<sup>52</sup>

Politics, like industry has an infrastructure. Political mobilization of direct political action requires certain technical facilities. These facilities include the mass media and telecommunications and public and private transportation. Formal governmental institutions are also part of this infrastructure.

In general, the strategy for neutralizing the political forces is to attack and control this infrastructure. However, some political forces are resilient enough to intervene even

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid., Pp. 107-109

though the infrastructure has been neutralized. These forces will have to be targeted separately.<sup>53</sup>

(1) Personalities within the government. A through analysis identifies the real government as opposed to the formal one. Government personalities should be classified into three categories. First there are the Ceremonial Figures. These positions hold little real power in the government and can usually be controlled once the real power is seized. These personalities can be either ignored or controlled. Next, The "inner council" or the real power brokers in South Korea must be arrested or killed outright. These individuals hold the real power. In South Korea, this would include at the minimum, the president, the prime minister, the ministers of home affairs, and defense and the director of the A.N.S.P.<sup>54</sup> This category should also include any other government leader who is personally popular among the masses. The third category is the other ministers and top civil servants. This group should be prioritized so that they can be dealt with appropriately as the new government consolidates its power.<sup>55</sup>

(2) Personalities outside the government. Normally the political clout of an individual outside the government is defined by his importance as the head of some organization or group. Treat these personalities as ceremonial

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., Pp. 110-111

<sup>54</sup>Savada and Shaw, p. 206

<sup>55</sup>Luttwak, p. 117

figures and neutralize the group or organization by attacking the infrastructure.

(3) Particular Groups. Luttwak suggests three types of organized groups that may be strong enough to oppose the overthrow of the government even if the government is silent, religious organizations, political parties and trade unions. These groups can normally be neutralized by controlling the infrastructure needed to mobilize opposition to the coup.<sup>56</sup>

In South Korea religious groups are too diverse to hold significant political power. Political parties are generally conservative and lack the expertise for mass agitation. Trade unions are required by law to be affiliated with one of seventeen government sponsored unions and with the Federation of Korean Trade Unions (FKTU). These groups do not pose a significant threat to the operation.<sup>57</sup>

## **2. Execution of the Campaign**

### **a. Necessary Conditions for Success**

The necessary conditions for success of an autonomous campaign are; detailed planning, speed of execution, timing and security.<sup>58</sup>

(1) Detailed Planning. The complexity of this campaign makes detailed planning a must. The actual execution of

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<sup>56</sup>Savada and Shaw, p. 128

<sup>57</sup>Luttwak, Pp. 147-155

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., Pp. 146-157

an autonomous operation will be conducted without conventional support by small units.

(3) Speed of Execution. Like a coup, the active phase of this campaign is based on the precise application of force to strike at the organizational heart of South Korea. The key to success is having the smaller forces of this campaign achieve local superiority over the larger South Korean Government forces. To achieve this local superiority, speed is essential. The whole idea of the counter-leadership campaign is to be able to present a fait accompli before the forces loyal to the government can rally to suppress it.

(4) Timing. Timing is crucial for success because of the need to hit so many targets simultaneously. Failure to neutralize even one important force may mean failure for the entire operation.

(5) Security. Every move made by subversive forces can generate information which could reveal the entire operation to the security agencies. For this reason, the security measures mentioned earlier are vital to the success of the campaign. The sheer magnitude of this type of operation requires either large numbers of agents infiltrate into South Korea or an extremely effective subversion effort. Either way, the number of people involved would be quite large, increasing the risk of a security leak.

**b. Physical Targets.<sup>59</sup>**

In addition to targeting personalities within the South, there are a number of physical targets that are important to the "autonomist" campaign.

(1) Mass Media. The control of information flowing from the political center is crucial. The goal is not just to control the information flow but to monopolize it. Because of the immediacy of radio and television, they are the priority targets. It would be practically impossible to seize all radio and television broadcasting facilities in South Korea. Therefore, the objective is to seize and hold the facility most identified with the voice of authority and neutralize the others.

(2) Telecommunications. Modern Governments rely heavily on fixed communications. By targeting communication nodes, the North Korean forces could paralyze the South Korean government reaction and prevent the government from deploying forces they still control. As it is not easy to infiltrate forces in the entire national territory, the North's forces would attack the mechanisms that could lead to the arrival of loyalist forces. Loyalist forces are not much of a threat if they can't be called in to intervene. There is no need to seize these facilities. Sabotage, either internal or external, is preferred.

(3) Transportation. During the active phase of the operation, the arrival of even a small contingent of loyalist forces or forces that have not been infiltrated may endanger the

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid., Pp. 118-130

entire operation. Major avenues of approach -- roads, railroads, subways, and airports -- need to be neutralized. To accomplish this, road-blocks are set up to control entry and exit into the capital city, setting up a perimeter around the center of political and bureaucratic activity. Airports, railroads and even the subways in Seoul also must be controlled to prevent reinforcements from loyalist forces.

(4) Public Buildings. Aside from the buildings that represent other targets, certain public buildings represent the power of the state. These buildings should be targeted to give visual evidence of the downfall of the government. Therefore, targets should include the seat of effective political power, the Blue House in South Korea; the main administration buildings, e.g. the combined government and ministerial building in Seoul; and other buildings that may represent governmental power in a purely symbolic sense.

#### **B. THE "INTEGRATIONIST" OR INTERDICTION MODEL**

##### **1. Strategy**

The strategy for the "integrationist" model is based on the former Soviet concept of creating a second "front in the enemy's rear."<sup>60</sup> Soviet doctrine states that, Special operations forces can be used across the spectrum of conflict to: 1) "decapitate" decision makers by elimination, incapacitation, or capture; 2) delay, deceive, and disorganize forces in reserve; 3) locate and

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<sup>60</sup>Major William H. Burgess III, editor, Inside Spetsnaz, Soviet Special Operations, A Critical Analysis, (Novato, Ca.: Presidio Press, 1990) p. 211

neutralize special weapons, delivery systems and weapon storage sites; 4) seize and control key terrain; 5) disrupt command control and communications (C3); and 6) otherwise exploit operational and strategic success.<sup>61</sup>

The deep operation was fundamental to Soviet perception of combined arms operations and battle. Soviet doctrine for deep operations entails the integration of a number of separate but interrelated operations to achieve simultaneous neutralization of the enemy's defenses through the entire depth of the battlefield. This doctrine calls for the rapid breakthrough of the enemy's tactical zones of defense along the main sector of attack. Soviet doctrine also reinforces success with rapid deployment of reserves to exploit tactical successes and turn them into Operational successes. Airborne and Air assault forces are used to increase the tempo of the operation.<sup>62</sup>

Rather than having a separate special operations doctrine, the Soviets viewed special operations as a subset of deep operations. Special operations becomes a force multiplier to improve the odds for victory by conventional forces.<sup>63</sup>

A special operations campaign based on Soviet tactics and doctrine would be waged primarily to assist general purpose forces. SOF would use their capabilities to delay, deceive,

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<sup>61</sup>US Army Field Manual 100-2-2, The Soviet Army, Specialized Warfare and Rear Area Support, (Washington D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 16 July 1984) Pp. 5.1-5.2

<sup>62</sup>Burgess, p. 225

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 226

disorganize, and otherwise disrupt the enemy. These forces act as "force multipliers" by diverting enemy attention and additional combat power from the main conventional attack.<sup>64</sup>

## **2. Missions**

In mid- and high-intensity conflicts, the focus of these special operations forces would be on special reconnaissance and direct action missions. The special reconnaissance would provide tactical and strategic intelligence. Direct action missions would be used to decapitate decision makers, interdict, delay and disorganize forces in reserve, neutralize special weapons and weapons stockpiles, interdict lines of communications, control bottlenecks, disrupt communications, and otherwise expedite breakthroughs by the general purpose forces. The North Korean Special Purpose Forces, like the old Soviet establishment is large enough to remain effective after the severe losses that can be expected while operating behind hostile lines.<sup>65</sup>

### **a. Special Reconnaissance**

Special reconnaissance missions would be initiated prior to hostilities, most likely through covert infiltration of agents from a third country. The focus of these reconnaissance missions would be to provide intelligence on the U.S and South Korean order of battle to assess the location, strength and disposition of these units. These pre-hostility missions could

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<sup>64</sup>John M. Collins, Green Berets Seals and Spetsnaz, U.S and Soviet Special Military Operations, (Melean, Va.: Perganon-Brassey's International Defense Publishers, 1988), p. 75

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., Pp. 62-63

also conduct target acquisition of critical facilities and personnel. Once hostilities begin, North Korean Special purpose forces would provide direct tactical intelligence for supported units as well as strategic intelligence. It is unlikely that these forces would conduct mass infiltrations of South Korea just prior to hostilities as this could compromise the upcoming invasion. However, once hostilities begin, large numbers of these special forces can be infiltrated by land, sea, and air to conduct direct action missions as well as continuing special reconnaissance.<sup>66</sup>

**b. Direct Action**

Direct action missions for this model run a wide spectrum. However Soviet doctrine suggests that the priorities would be on missions such as assassination, sabotage, raids, and ambushes.<sup>67</sup> These missions are conducted at the tactical level through the strategic level.

Special purpose forces would conduct assassination missions to decapitate key military and political decision makers just prior to or upon initiation of hostilities. The Soviets and North Koreans both have histories that show no reluctance to using assassination as a tool to disrupt enemy forces. Soviet Spetsnaz were responsible for the assassination of Afghanistan's President Amin; and North Korean forces have made at least five attempts on the lives of South Korean presidents.

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<sup>66</sup>Burgess, p. 252

<sup>67</sup>Collins, p. 7

In an "integrationist" campaign based on Soviet doctrine, all operations are based on the main effort.<sup>68</sup> These special operations forces conduct ambushes to prevent enemy forces from reinforcing the weak points enabling the North's conventional forces to breakthrough. Ambushes are also used to prevent supplies from reaching the front and to prevent retreating enemy forces from regrouping.

Raids are another priority for the North Korean Special Purpose Forces in this type of campaign. Special operators conduct raids to destroy special weapons such as cruise missiles and air defense weapons. They conduct raids to destroy airfields, command and control centers, and ammunition and fuel storage sites. The raid can be used to destroy nearly any part of the enemy's infrastructure, or otherwise support the main effort of the GPF.<sup>69</sup>

Like special reconnaissance missions, sabotage operations will likely begin prior to or immediately on initiation of hostilities to disrupt the enemy's infrastructure. Targets will likely include fuel production and storage, telephone networks, power stations, and bulk transportation centers. Sabotage can be direct or indirect. Direct sabotage is

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<sup>68</sup>Collins, p. 62

<sup>69</sup>Ross S. Kelly, Special Operations and National Purpose, (Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books, 1989), p. 80

the damaging or destruction of installations, products, and supplies. Indirect sabotage degrades the production processes.<sup>70</sup>

Psychological operations (psyops) and subversion also are priority missions for these special purpose forces in an integrated campaign. Psyops is the planned use of propaganda and actions to influence opinions, emotions, attitudes, and behavior in ways that help accomplish strategic objectives. Subversion is a special form of psyops that undermines morale, discipline, will and loyalty of people to their leaders. These missions use propaganda and disinformation to separate individuals from groups and groups from each other and society at large. Apathy, Panic, disobedience, desertion, and surrender are command objectives.<sup>71</sup>

This subversion differs from the subversion in the "autonomist" campaign. In the "autonomist" model, subversion is aimed at coopting active participants from the military. It goes beyond mere psyops and requires actual recruitment. Subversion in the "integrationist" model is a form of psyops aimed at both the military and civilian population but is not designed to recruit active participants.

Soviet doctrinal concepts also included the use of "pseudo" operations. "Pseudo," or false flag, operations are operations conducted in the enemy's uniform and speaking the enemy's language. An example of this was the Nazi use of English speaking Germans disguised as American MPs during Battle of the

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<sup>70</sup>Collins, p. 85

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., Pp. 88, 108, 113

Bulge in World War II to conduct reconnaissance, sabotage, and direct action missions behind Allied lines. North Korea possesses stockpiles of South Korean uniforms and is likely to conduct this type of operation.<sup>72</sup>

Infiltration is an important aspect of all these missions. "Sleepers" who infiltrate during peacetime, under the guise of immigration or tourism, usually from a third country, conduct these missions initially. These "sleepers" appear to lead routine lives until they are activated by authorities. Once hostilities break out, special operators will infiltrate by a variety of means by land, sea, or air.<sup>73</sup>

Many of these missions and targets of this campaign seem similar to those of the "autonomist" campaign. However, there are important differences. On the one hand, operations in the "autonomist" campaign are necessarily constrained because the main goal is to neutralize the political infrastructure temporarily but not to destroy it. The government that the counter-leadership campaign puts in place will need the infrastructure to govern. Also, these operations must at least have the appearance of being conducted by forces within the target country. The true nature of the outside support must be kept hidden. Additionally, in the "autonomist" campaign, these operations are conducted while trying to keep actual casualties to a minimum.

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<sup>72</sup>Burgess, p. 151

<sup>73</sup>Collins, Pp. 88-89

On the other hand, operations in the "integrationist" campaign are aimed at the destruction of the war-fighting infrastructure in order to aid the main conventional war effort. These operations are designed to inflict maximum casualties and damage on the enemy. There are no such constraints as found in the "autonomist" model.



#### **IV. EVALUATION AND PROBABLE CAMPAIGN**

##### **A. EVALUATION**

An evaluation of North Korea's capabilities and past record shows that their special purpose forces were designed to operate either autonomously or to be integrated into conventional operations. However, political, military, and economic factors point toward North Korea using these special purpose forces generally along the lines of the "integrationist" campaign and not in a "autonomist" campaign. There may be some slight overlap, however, between the kinds of operations.

###### **1. Political Factors**

In the past, North Korean leaders apparently believed that an unconventional campaign had a great likelihood of success. Evidence in the trial of the two North Korean commandos convicted of the Rangoon Bombing suggested that the North was ready to infiltrate "thousands" of its unconventional troops into South Korea dressed in U.S. and ROK uniforms if the bomb had killed president Chun Doo Hwan.<sup>74</sup> The political situation was much different then. In 1983, South Korea was under a government that came to power through a military coup. There existed extensive domestic unrest in South Korea, as evidenced by the Kwangju uprising of May 1981. An event that began as a student demonstration and ended with the military having to retake the town of Kwangju by force, killing about 200 civilians in a ten-

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<sup>74</sup>Denbow, Finta, and Samuels, p. 16

day period.<sup>75</sup> The very legitimacy of the government was in question.

Today's political situation is vastly different. South Korea has made two peaceful transitions of presidents elected by popular vote. The South Korean government is no longer in the hands of a few power brokers. This new government would not be easily toppled in a coup-like operation. This recent rise in legitimacy makes it much more difficult to conduct subversion operations to the extent needed for an "autonomist" campaign.

The possibility exists for the North Koreans to pursue an "autonomist" strategy if this situation does not match their perception of it. If they still believe that the South Korean government is vulnerable to a coup-like operation, they may attempt this type of campaign. However, the likelihood of success for an "autonomist" campaign is slim.

## **2. Military Factors**

Several military factors point to the "integrationist" campaign. The North Korean doctrine, the defense posture of the South, the number and type of forces required for each type of campaign, and past successes and failures. The complexity and vulnerability of each also figure into the probable campaign.

According to North Korean Army defectors, the North's strategy calls for a two-front war to neutralize the bulk of U.S. and ROK military forces near the Demilitarized Zone, derail the South's mobilization and American augmentation effort, isolate

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<sup>75</sup>Savada and Shaw, p. 55

Seoul, and begin peace negotiations all within seven days.<sup>76</sup> This strategy is consistent with the North's theory of three revolutions and fits the "integrationist" model. Operations following the "autonomist" model involve a single covert front to accomplish the strategic objective. They are not linked to a conventional conflict.

The South's defense posture has recently been successful at intercepting and tracking down infiltrators. South Korea also has extensive security agencies to discover and eradicate any "autonomist" type operation. One can only assume that North Korea is aware of this and comes to these logical conclusions.

Both types of campaigns require large numbers of forces. The two major differences are the greater need for security in an "autonomist" campaign, and that the forces for this type of campaign preferably include subverted forces from the South. The difficulties that the North would encounter in its subversion efforts for the "autonomist" campaign would require the infiltration of large numbers of agents to have a successful campaign. The larger number of agents infiltrating make security nearly impossible. Smaller numbers could possibly pull off a partial success with the assassination of a few key individuals in the south. The results of this partial success would be tragic, but, would fall well short of the collapse of the South Korean government.

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<sup>76</sup>Defense Intelligence Agency, Pp. 4-6

The biggest success for the North's special purpose forces was their ability to tie up significant conventional forces in the South prior to the Korean War. This unconventional warfare campaign, combined with the 1950 invasion, nearly allowed them to win the war and was clearly "integrationist."

The "autonomist" campaign requires the simultaneous execution of multiple missions, all of which are critical to the success of the campaign. This makes this campaign extremely vulnerable to failure especially with the present political and economic situation on the Korean Peninsula. Failure of just one aspect of the "autonomist" campaign can spell failure of the entire campaign. The "integrationist" campaign has multiple missions, but, they are not nearly so interdependent for success. Tactical failure of one or even many of the missions involved in this campaign still divert enemy forces from the main conventional effort. Thus, contributing to the ultimate success of the overall campaign. The large size of North Korea's Special Purpose Forces gives them the ability to absorb the considerable losses involved in operations of this type. These factors point North Korean forces being better suited for a "Integrationist" campaign.

### **3. Economics**

The economic development of South Korea has meant rising incomes, increased mobility, and increased literacy rate for the average South Korean citizen. This socioeconomic progress also

makes successful subversion needed for a "autonomist" campaign unlikely and extremely difficult.<sup>77</sup>

These factors do not rule out the potential for an "autonomist" campaign. They do, however, point to its likely failure. If North Korean perceptions do not match this analysis, or if, in the future, the South Korean government should return to the repressive ways of the past, and the North again perceives that the South is vulnerable to a coup-like operation, this type of campaign becomes more likely.

#### B. PROBABLE CAMPAIGN

If the North decides again to invade South Korea, the strategy of the North Korean army is to fight a two-front war aimed at sweeping the peninsula in just 5-7 days.<sup>78</sup> The special purpose forces play a significant role in this plan. The probable campaign for these forces is based generally on the "integrationist" model. These forces would be used primarily to provide intelligence and fight the second front in South Korean rear area. There is a possibility that the North would launch an "autonomist" campaign or a hybrid campaign as a deception. This should not be a significant problem for South Korea. The strength of the South's security agencies and the decreased susceptibility of their government to a coup-like operation combine to counter any problems this deception would cause.

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<sup>77</sup>Savada and Shaw, p. 178

<sup>78</sup>General William J Livsey, "Task In Korea: Convince North Attack is Futile" Army, October, 1985, p. 135

Prior to hostilities, North Korean special purpose forces would be infiltrated in small teams to conduct special reconnaissance and direct action missions. To avoid giving away the imminent invasion, these teams would primarily be infiltrated covertly through a third country to link up with "sleeper" agents and begin operations. Initially, reconnaissance operations would be focused on locating missile and weapon storage sites, as well as acquisition of other high value targets for future attack. They would also be used to gather order of battle data, location, size, and disposition of the South Korean armed forces and U.S. forces. These forces would normally operate in a passive mode to avoid detection by the South. They would most likely focus on gathering intelligence at a strategic-level of importance. As the impending invasion nears, the focus would shift to more tactical types of intelligence targets. The target acquisition would include identifying and targeting key individuals in the U.S. and ROK military for assassination, as well as key South Korean political figures.

Direct action operations would call for the insertion of small teams by covert means, possibly by waterborne infiltration. In a covert only operation, these teams could be expected to conduct subversion and sabotage operations to disrupt military operations, government operation and day-to-day life in South Korea. Especially vulnerable are the major ports and the lines of communication (LOCs) such as railroads and major highways. Most South Korean harbors are susceptible to attack or sabotage

of locks and heavy cranes. This equipment is vital for South Korean ports to remain functional to receive supplies and reinforcements in the event of war.<sup>79</sup> The road and rail systems have been improved recently but still possess many choke points vulnerable to attack.<sup>80</sup>

Terrorist operations would likely increase dramatically in peacetime. The North Koreans have shown that they are willing to use terror tactics. It gives them a low risk inexpensive weapon to use to further foreign policy. Likely targets would be U.S. troops and family members, South Korean military, and government buildings and officials. They would most likely use bombings, kidnapping and assassinations. Terror tactics usually cost more in political capital than they gain in any form. However, the North Koreans have already shown a willingness to use terrorism. As a conventional conflict gets closer, terror tactics would intensify and then fall off just prior to the invasion.

Once hostilities begin, these Special Purpose Forces would conduct both unconventional and conventional warfare. Wartime operations would consist mainly of special reconnaissance operations, wider sabotage operations, raids and ambushes, as well as conventional operations. The benefits of terror would likely dwindle with the onset of an invasion.

Reconnaissance operations would continue but shift to a more tactical focus. They would concentrate on gathering information

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<sup>79</sup>Denbow, Finta, and Samuels, p.51

<sup>80</sup>Savada and Shaw, Pp. 178-181

on troop movements and air operations. They would observe fighter/attack aircraft takeoffs. Ports, harbors and airfields would be watched to collect data on logistics and reinforcements. They would also do battle damage assessments.

Direct action missions would further intensify. Infiltration would now expand to the land and air. These guerrilla units would create confusion in the enemy rear areas by interdicting reinforcements, ambushing supply convoys, and attacking specific enemy defense installations. These specific installations include the Blue House and the headquarters units of both the Korean and American commands.<sup>81</sup>

Raids can be expected against fixed targets and garrisoned troops, and ambushes may be conducted on mobile targets of opportunity, both civilian and military. As hostilities begin, massive infiltration of these forces would be accomplished with the operational focus turning to support the conventional invasion. They would target command and control centers, ammunition storage sites, reinforcements, anything that will support the conventional forces.

The third major element of wartime operations by the Special Purpose Forces is the infiltration of light infantry brigade units in company to brigade sized elements to conduct conventional operations in the enemy's rear area. These units will infiltrate on land by exploring any weak points in the DMZ and by using the system of tunnels under the DMZ. Airborne units

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<sup>81</sup>Jacobs, p.16

can be expected to jump in and amphibious units to be infiltrated by sea. The 250 AN-2/Colts and over 100 Nampo-class fast landing craft (hovercraft) provide a significant amount of infiltration capability.

These larger units are specifically charged with creating chaos and confusion in the enemy's rear area. They will conduct ranger-type missions to seize and secure key terrain and attack key installations (command, control and communications). They will target reinforcements and block potential routes of retreat from the DMZ. These units will comprise the second front of the North Korean two-front strategy.

Other light-infantry brigades will fight in a more conventional rôle of direct support for conventional forces. They will conduct screening and reconnaissance operations for these maneuver units.

It is important to note that 65 percent of the North Korean ground forces are within 50 miles of the border and in position for attacking. This gives them the capability of launching an invasion with little warning. This potential for shock and surprise, coupled with huge unconventional warfare forces, combine to establish a key element in North Korean doctrine. This element is the synchronization of shock and unconventional warfare operations.

#### **C. PEACETIME THREAT**

Several factors may work to motivate the North Korean government to intensify its covert operations during peacetime.

First, their strategy of long term unconventional warfare to infiltrate and subvert the South Korean government since the early 1970s has met with little success. It has failed to create that revolutionary force within the south. Recently, in October 1992, South Korean authorities rounded up a number of Korean Workers Party espionage agents.<sup>82</sup> Other factors are the widening economic gap between the two countries and a corresponding widening gap in the national powers of the north and south. This is further complicated by the north's own international isolation.

Additionally, the "year of national reunification", 1995 has arrived. The possible succession crisis in the North could also lead to heightened peacetime operations. Kim Jong Il may resort to these type of operations to rally support with hard-liners in his own regime or to divert attention away from his internal power struggle. Many analysts have tied the terror tactics of the eighties to the younger Kim. He is said to have masterminded the bombing of KAL Flight 858, the Rangoon bombing, and other terrorist attacks.<sup>83</sup> Finally, the recent collapse of communism in the former Soviet Union may make the North Korean government feel it has to act to strengthen its own position. These factors may very well serve to motivate the north to turn up the heat on covert operations

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<sup>82</sup>Defense White Paper, p. 57

<sup>83</sup>Denbow, Finta, and Samuels, p. 9

A more intense peacetime campaign would look much the same as operations prior to a conventional war. It would be composed of increased infiltrations to conduct reconnaissance operations, guerrilla operations and terrorist operations. These would look much like the same as what has been going on since the early 1970s, but on a larger scale. South Korean authorities have been very successful at tracking down these units using civil police, paramilitary and regular military forces. However, they have only had to deal with these units in very small numbers.

Reconnaissance operations would be focused on locating missile and weapon storage sites, as well as other high value targets for future attack. They would also be used to gather order of battle data on the South Korean armed forces and U.S. forces. These forces would normally operate in a passive mode to avoid detection by the South. They would most likely focus on gathering intelligence of a strategic-level importance.

Guerrilla operations would call for the insertion of small teams primarily from a third country in peacetime. In a covert only operation, these teams could be expected to conduct subversion and sabotage operations that disrupt military operations, government operation and day to day life in South Korea. Raids can be expected against fixed targets and garrisoned troops, and ambushes may be conducted on mobile targets of opportunity, both civilian and military. Terrorism would be as discussed above.

This scenario, considered with the stated policy goal of both North Korea and the Korean Workers party of achieving unification amounts to a very real threat. The United States has long-standing treaty obligations with South Korea. We have maintained U.S. troops forward deployed in South Korea as a deterrent to war for many years. How do we continue a credible deterrent to conventional war and establish deterrence for unconventional operations and terrorism?

## V. HOW TO DETER OR COUNTER THE THREAT

Conventional deterrence theory works on simple cost/benefit analysis. If the cost plus the risk is greater than the expected benefit, then deterrence is successful (if  $C + R > B$ , then peace). If the cost plus the risk is less than the expected benefit, then deterrence will fail (if  $C + R < B$ , then conflict). To further refine this equation we add the probability of the different outcomes. The probability of failing and therefore enduring the costs is inversely proportional to the probability of achieving the desired benefit. Therefore, if  $(P)(C + R) > (B)(1-P)$  then peace, and if  $(P)(C + R) < (B)(1-P)$ , then conflict.<sup>84</sup>

This means operationally, that to deter North Korea's use of these special purpose forces, South Korea and the United States must either raise the cost and risk above the potential benefit, or reduce the probability that the North will attain its aims. This challenges both the United States and South Korea to develop appropriate responses.

### A. SOUTH KOREAN RESPONSE

The South Korean response to the threat is simply to prepare itself for self defense. A defense that is strong enough to deny the enemy's success will deter him. This self-defense means slightly different things for the three kinds of threat these

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<sup>84</sup>Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), p. 60

forces pose, conventional invasion, unconventional warfare and terrorism in an "integrationist" campaign.

In the unlikely event of the North launching an "autonomist" campaign, South Korea is well prepared to defeat this threat with their extensive security agencies. An additional measure that they could consider, is the development of a strike force within these existing security agencies tailored to defend against just this sort of threat.

The threat of conventional invasion has been deterred by a combined effort of U.S. and South Korean forces since the end of the Korean War forty-odd years ago. To continue this success, South Korea has a doctrine of forward defense based on the premise that the KPA must not be allowed to reach Seoul. The South should continue to emphasize improving combat effectiveness, strengthening alliance cohesion with the U.S., enhancing inter-operability with U. S. forces, and demonstrate joint and combined capabilities. They also need to increase vigilance and intelligence gathering to reduce the element of surprise that the North could enjoy in launching an attack.

South Korea also has a pretty good track record when it comes to defending against the unconventional threat during peacetime. However, they have not been tested with the numbers of infiltrations that would be seen, either in an intense UW campaign or as a pre-cursor to an invasion. In order to deter this threat, the south needs to focus on not allowing the different types of infiltrations to be successful. First, to

counter land infiltrations, South Korean and U.S. forces alike need to increase vigilance and intelligence gathering. There is also mining and seismographic equipment that may be used to locate tunnels along the DMZ. Second, increased aerial and coastal surveillance to counter waterborne infiltration. The South Korean military could also work to enhance relations with paramilitary forces, civil authorities and the general population to promote better reporting. South Korea is densely populated. Operations in South Korea are extremely difficult to conduct without someone detecting you. There is also a need to increase civilian awareness of the threat. Third, many of these same measures will go far to deter the threat of airborne infiltration. Finally, passive measures to reduce the vulnerabilities of potential targets should be enhanced.

A thorough study of the vulnerabilities of important facilities would give specific measures to be taken. Critical nodes in these facilities such as the heavy lift cranes, locks, and piers in South Korea's ports must be either protected or alternate means to accomplish the same function should be developed. An example of this is the development of a logistics over the shore (LOTS) equipment as an alternate means in the event of harbors and ports being put out of action. Airport security measures must include protection for runway approaches, crew billets and vital control and support facilities. Alternate routes should be preplanned around all choke points in the South's transportation system (road and rail). Security at all

critical facilities and key industrial complexes could be enhanced with the use of electronic security equipment.<sup>85</sup>

The third type of threat is more difficult to deter. Protection of facilities and people, both Korean and American, from terrorism is primarily the responsibility of South Korea. Here again, intelligence gathering is the key to being able to defend against terrorism. It is also necessary to adopt a firm policy against terrorism. If the South Korean authorities, with U.S. assistance can deny the benefits of this tactic and convince Kim Il Sung that terrorism is expensive.

#### **B. UNITED STATES RESPONSE**

There are currently roughly 36,000 U.S. military personnel stationed in Korea. These forces are there to deter war. Their presence in South Korea makes them available for coalition warfare in the event of war, honors our treaty obligations and most importantly sends a message of our resolve to North Korea. The U.S. response to the threat posed by the North Korean special purpose forces should support the South Korean efforts by assisting in their effort to deny North Korean infiltrations, gather intelligence, and enhance interoperability. However, our main focus should be on establishing a firm policy against aggression of any kind by the north. To accomplish this, the U.S. must make its position credible.

Here are a few ideas on policy alternatives. First, we need to continue our presence on the peninsula at the present level.

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<sup>85</sup>Denbow, Finta, and Samuels, Pp. 51-53

Reductions would give a tacit signal that our resolve is weakening. The United States should also consider deterrence by punishment. They should explore the use of coercive measures, maybe even strikes to punish terrorism as the United States did in Libya. American influence in Japan could be used to cut off economic ties with North Korea. Sino-American relations could be tied to the Chinese using what influence they have to deter North Korean aggression. America's global influence could be used to get the international community to condemn North Korea's sponsorship of violence and terrorism. One thing the U.S. should not do is make statements about what we will not allow, and then, be unprepared to back them up. These are only a few ideas for policy options of the U.S.

The potential for a crisis in current North Korean succession may be the perfect opportunity to try the carrot instead of the stick. The U.S. should explore the option of opening diplomatic relations with North Korea. This would facilitate diplomatic negotiations for any future problems that arise. This option may be acceptable to the North as it would enhance the legitimacy of Kim Jong Il's presidency. Both China and the former Soviet Union established relations with South Korea. A little cross-recognition might be in order.

#### C. CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has attempted to identify the scope of the threat posed by the North Korean Special Forces, how a probable North Korean campaign might look and some thoughts on deterring

it. This force of 100,000 men poses a significant peacetime as well as wartime threat. Their operations consist of conventional, unconventional and terrorist operations. It is vitally important that both the United States and South Korea know as much about this threat as possible in order to formulate plans to defend against it and deter it.

Any conclusions that can be drawn from this research about the future use of Special Operations Forces in general must be qualified. The research for this thesis has focused solely on the forces of North Korea. North Korea is probably a unique case. It is undoubtably the most militarized country in the world. It has been a perculiar mix of communism and a personality cult united around Kim Il Sung. What will emerge from the current succession crisis is yet to be seen. This all limits the applicability of any conclusions that can be drawn from this case.

The one conclusion about Special Operations Forces in general that can be drawn from this research may be the importance of interoperability with conventional forces. The "integrationist" model highlights the value of these forces as "force multipliers" when properly integrated in the overall strategic campaign. This integration may be a model for the future of Special Operations Forces around the world.

**APPENDIX: CHRONOLOGICAL LISTING MAJOR NORTH KOREAN OPERATIONS  
(1965-PRESENT)**

**1965**

June 13 - Two armed agents in Marine Corps uniform appear near Kigok-ri, Wonduck-myun, Samchok-kun, Kangwon-do and attempted to abduct civilians to North Korea before being captured alive.

July 18 - A band of three agents, heavily armed with dynamite, submachine guns, pistols, hand grenades and radios, appear near Songchu in northwestern outskirts of Seoul with the mission of assassinating political leaders. Two of the intruders are shot dead and the third flees.

September 19 - Two armed agents stab three medicinal herb collectors to death on Mt Kumangbong near Changam-ri, Idong-myun, Pochon-kun, Kyungggi-do.

October 8 - Three armed agents ambush and kill two South Korean soldiers on Mt. Kodea near Kalmal-myon, Cholwon-kun, Kangwondo.

October 11 - Four armed agents destroy ten drums of diesel oil with hand grenades at the Second Battalion, 23rd Infantry of the U.S. Second Division installation.

October 24 - Six armed agents break into home of Lt. Colonel Kim Tu-pyo near Changpyong-ri, Pangsang-myon, Yangku-kun, Kangwon-do, and killed Col. Kim, his two daughters and his sister-in-law. Mrs. Kim suffers a serious wound.

## 1966

January 26 - Two North Korean torpedo boats and three speed vessels encircle three South Korean fishing vessels off Sokcho south of the eastern truce line extension, gun down the skipper of a fishing boat and hijack two other boats.

October 15 - A North Korean patrol unit abducts a South Korean soldier and raids South Korean troops nine times in five days until October 19 in the mid-eastern front line area.

October 21 - A South Korean Army food truck is ambushed by North Korean troops 500 meters south of the line in the western sector. Two South Korean soldiers aboard the vehicle are killed and two others wounded.

November 2 - A group of heavily armed North Korean soldiers intrude 400 meters south of the Demilitarized Zone and attack United Nations Command troops on duty, killing seven of them.

November 29 - North Korean gun boats attack a fleet of South Korean fishing boats off Kosong on the east coast, and hijack one of them.

**1967**

January 19 - North Korean shore batteries shell and sink a South Korean naval vessel on duty with South Korean fishing boats south of the truce line extension in the eastern sea. Forty crewmen of the sunken ship are killed or wounded.

February 3 - Squad-strength North Korean troops raid a South Korean Army outpost 800 meters south of the Military Demarcation Line in the central front line area.

February 5 - Several North Korean soldiers infiltrate the area of a United Nations Command outpost 900 meters south of the Military Demarcation Line near Panmunjon.

March 10 - North Korean troops infiltrate the south of the Military Demarcation Line three times.

March 12 - About 60 to 90 North Korean troops open fire at United Nations Command patrols.

August 28 - A group of North Korean troops raid an enlisted men's dining hall at a U.S. military engineering unit 3 km south of the truce line in the western sector. Two American soldiers and KATUSA (Korean Augmentation Troops to U.S. Army) solider are killed, and some 20 others wounded.

September 5 - North Korean terrorists blast a train south of Chosungri Chongsan-myon, Pochon-kum, Kyonggi-do.

September 13 - North Korean terrorists blast a train south 600 meters south of Unjong Station along the Susaek-Munsan line.

October 6 - North Korean soldiers open fire at a group of American soldiers checking water depth along the Imjin river some 300 meters south of the Military Demarcation Line.

November 3 - North Korean gun boats attack a fleet of 228 South Korean fishing boats south of the truce line extension in the eastern sea, abducting 12 fishing boats and their crews.

December 6 - Three North Korean gunboats abduct 41 South Korean seaman aboard seven fishing boats off Kojinn along the east coast.

**1968**

January 11 - North Korean attack 200 South Korean fishing boats, sinking one of them and abducting another with six crewman to the north.

January 21 - Thirty-one commandoes of the North Korean 124th Unit infiltrate into Seoul with the mission of raiding Chong Wa Dae. In ensuing exchanges of fire, all the intruders excepting one who surrenders are shot dead.

January 23 - Four North Korean patrol boats, supported by two MiG planes, hijack U.S.S. Pueblo with 83 crewman aboard on the high seas.

January 25 - About ten North Korean soldiers intrude into the U.S. Second Division area in the western sector, killing or wounding three KATUSA and 11 American soldiers.

January 26 - A spokesman for the United Nations Command announces that North Korean intruders were repelled in exchanges of fire along the truce line four times January 26 and 27.

April 14 - Five unidentified persons ambush a three-quarter-ton truck with seven American and KATUSA soldiers aboard in the U.S. Second Division area, killing two American and KATUSA soldiers.

April 21 - An eleven-man patrol squad of the 75th Infantry of the South Korean 25th Division is ambushed by North Korean soldiers. In an ensuing exchange of fire, one of the four South Korean soldiers killed and three others wounded. Three North Korean soldiers were also shot dead.

July 8 - Three unidentified armed persons appear near Wolnong-myong, Paju-kun, Kyonggi-do. Challenged by South Korean troops helping farmers transplant rice, the intruders run away as they open fire at the challengers. Two South Korean soldiers are wounded.

July 20 - A U.S. Army patrol team is ambushed by an unknown number of unidentified persons in the U.S. Second Division area near Panchong-ri, Paekhwak-myong, Yonchon-kun, Kyonggi-do. An American officer is killed.

September 4 - Five unidentified armed persons attack South Korean troops on guard duty in the 28th Division area near Yangku, Kangwon-do, killing two of them and wounding two others.

September 4 - A truck carrying South Korean troops is ambushed by five unidentified armed persons in the 12th Division area near Kosung, Kangwon-do. Four South Korean soldiers are killed and another wounded.

September 7 - An unknown number of unidentified persons appear in the U.S. Second Division area near Paju, Kyonggi-do. In an ensuing exchange of fire, two American soldiers from First Battalion, 31st Infantry of the Second Division's Third Brigade are killed.

September 27 - An unknown number of North Korean soldiers appear in the southern sector of the Demilitarized Zone in the U.S. Second Division area near Imjin-myon, Paaju-kun, Kyonggi-do. Two American soldiers are killed in an ensuing engagement.

October 23 - A patrol team from the 28th South Korean Division is ambushed by North Korean soldiers in the southern sector of the Demilitarized Zone near Yanju, Kyonggi-do. Three South Korean soldiers are killed.

October 30 - A large number of North Korean guerrillas in eight groups of 15 crack troops each from the 124th North Korean Unit, land on nearly the same spot along the southern coast in three occasions until November 2, and head for different destinations for subversive operations. With the mission of occupying and "revolutionalizing" isolated mountainous villages, the intruders attempt to indoctrinate villagers with Communist organizations and distribute both genuine and counterfeit South Korean currency to them. The guerrillas do not hesitate to kill obedient villagers as turncoats or reactionaries.

**1969**

February 25 - A south Korean naval vessel sights an unidentified boat sailing toward the north near Tokchok-do in the western sea. On being challenged, the boat opens fire as it crosses the truce line extension into the north. Two crewman of the naval vessel are killed and eight others are wounded.

March 15 - A group of 19 troops from the Fourth Brigade of the U.S. Second Division are attacked by North Korean soldiers while repairing a Military Demarcation Marker, work which was duly announced to the North Koreans beforehand. One American solider is killed and three others are wounded.

April 15 - A U.S. Navy EC-121 reconnaissance plane with 31 crewmen aboard is shot down by North Korean fighters on the eastern high seas.

August 17 - An OH-23 helicopter of the U.S. Army 59th Aviation Company is shot down by North Korean ground fire during a routine training flight near Puksung-ri, Yangsa-myon, Kwanghwa-kun, Kyonggi-do. Three crewmen of the helicopter, which crashed north of the truce line, are returned on December 3, 1969.

September 17 - An unidentified vessel, believed to be a North Korean spy boat, opens fire at a police patrol ship and a nearby

fishing boat near Shinji-do of Wando-kun, Chollanamdo, sinking the police vessel. Two policemen and one janitor aboard the sunken ship are listed as missing. Two fishermen aboard the fishing boat are killed and another wounded.

September 23 - A North Korean espionage vessel appears in some 20 miles west of Huksan-do in the western sea. A South Korean naval vessel sinks it after a four hour pursuit. All 15 agents aboard the ship are killed. Six sailors of the naval vessel are also wounded in the encounter.

October 13 - A North Korean espionage vessel infiltrates north of Sohuksan-do, Shinan-kun, Cholla-namdo. A South Korean naval ship, assisted by Air Force planes, destroy the fleeing spy boat.

## **1970**

April 3 - A South Korean naval ship, on patrol duty in the western sea, spots and sinks an infiltrating North Korean spy boat southwest of Kyokyolbi-bo.

June 5 - A South Korean naval vessel, engaged in a psychological warfare operation against a fleet of North Korean fishing boats, is attacked and hijacked by two North Korean gunboats.

June 22 - A North Korean agent attempting to place dynamite at the gate of the National Cemetery at Dongjak-dong, Seoul, dies when the explosive goes off accidentally. Two more agents, believed to have been involved in the dynamite setting, elude capture.

June 29 - An unidentified vessel approaching the shore line 500 yards north of Yonghung-myon, Pochon-kun, Kyonggi-do is captured in a joint naval and air force operation. In a subsequent search operation near the shore line area, six intruders are killed on Kuksapong Peak, Yonghung-do.

July 27 - A 50-ton North Korean spy boat infiltrating 11 miles northeast of Yongdock, Kyonfsang-pukdo, is detected and sunk in a joint naval and air force operation.

December 5 - Three North Korean intruders appear in the area of the 9th company, 3rd Battalion of the 97th Battle Group near Tanhyun-myon, Paj-kun, Kyonggi-do. In an ensuing engagement, a South Korean solider is wounded.

## 1971

April 30 - North Korean troops fire about 200 machine gun rounds at the South Korean fifth Marine Brigade position.

May 14 - A North Korean spy boat infiltrates 1.7 miles east of Mukho along the east coast. The boat is sunk and 17 agents aboard are killed.

June 1 - A North Korean spy boat infiltrates 75 miles southwest of Sohuksan-do in the western sea. The 70-ton boat with 15 agents aboard is sunk in a joint navy-air force operation. In the engagement, a C-46 transport crashes and eight servicemen are listed as missing.

June 16 - Four North Korean agents appear in the 20th Division area near Yonchon, Kyonggi-do. One of the intruders is shot dead.

August 16 - Five North Korean agents appear in the First Division area. Two of the intruders are killed, and the remaining three escape.

## **1972**

January 12 - Six intruders appear near a guard post of the U.S. Second Division and throws rocks at the GP before fleeing.

January 16 - Two intruders in black clothes appear some 300 meters west of a United Nations Command checkpoint in the southern sector of the Demilitarized Zone.

February 4 - Three North Korean patrol boats hijack two South Korean fishing vessels 40 miles southwest of Kyukyolbi-do in the western sea.

June 23 - North Korean troops open machine gun fire at a South Korean Army post near the truce line.

March 4 - Several armed agents infiltrate into Woo-do 48 km east of Cheju-do and kill a security guard before fleeing.

March 7 - North Korean troops open fire at a group of South Korean soldiers on duty in the southern sector of the Demilitarized Zone in the central front line area, killing or wounding three of them.

April 17 - Two North Korean agents infiltrating the southern sector of the Demilitarized Zone north of Yonchon, Kyonggi-do are shot dead.

May 5 - Two armed North Korean agents infiltrate Kumdang-do 33 km east of Wando-kun, and open fire at and wound a villager.

November 19 - A North Korean gunboat intrudes into South Korean territorial waters east of Paengnyong-do in western sea.

December 1 - North Korea claims at a Military Armistice Commission meeting that the waters contiguous to the five islands in the western sea are its territorial waters.

December 10 - North Korean gunboats violate the extension of the truce in the western sea three times.

December 18 - Two North Korean gunboats intrude north of Sochongdo in the western sea.

#### **1974**

February 15 - North Korean gunboats attack two unarmed South Korean fishing boats on the high seas 48 km west of Paengnyong-do in the western sea, sinking one and hijacking the other.

February 16 - An unknown number of North Korean agents appear on the beach at Tongyong, Kyongsang-namdo.

March 3 - Some 120 North Korean guards in the Joint Security Area of Panmunjon assault UNC personnel after a North Korean soldier was prevented from photographing a ranking UNC general. Four UNC servicemen are injured and four UNC vehicles damaged in the assault.

April 1 - Four North Korean naval ships intrude south of the truce line extension in the western sea.

May 9 - North Korean troops open fire at a U.S. Army helicopter flying south of the Military Demarcation Line.

May 21 - Three North Korean agents infiltrate into Taeso-ri, Chujamyon, Pukcheju-kun. One intruder is shot dead and the two others flee.

May 21 - Four North Korean naval ships intrude south of the truce line extension in the western sea.

June 28 - Three North Korean gunboats attack a South Korean police patrol boat looking after the operation of fishing boats.

July 1 - A total of eight North Korean naval ships intrude south of the truce line extension in the western sea for the seventh time since June 25.

July 2 - A North Korean spy boat infiltrates seven miles southeast of Song-do, Pusan. A South Korean naval vessel intercepts and sinks it. One South Korean seaman is killed and three others wounded in the engagement.

July 18 - North Korean anti-air batteries open fire at a Korean Air line (KAL) plane flying in South Korea air space north of Kimpo.

July 20 - A North Korean spy boat infiltrates west of Ochchong-do near Kunsan along the west coast. The spy boat is sunk in a three-hour navy and air force operation.

August 15 - A Han Min Tong, Pro-North Korean organization in Japan, handling agent fired a pistol at President Park Chung-Hee, at the ceremony marking the 29th National Liberation, killing the First Lady.

November 15 - The United Nations Command announces the discovery of an underground tunnel dug by the North Koreans beneath the truce line in the mid-western front line area.

November 20 - A South Korean Army officer is killed and an American officer listed as missing when an explosive goes off in the North Korean-dug tunnel in the Demilitarized Zone.

December 15 - An armed North Korean ship infiltrates 50 miles west of Inchon and sinks itself when detected and challenged by a South Korean naval vessel.

**1975**

February 15 - A North Korean spy boat, disguised as a fishing vessel, infiltrates 3 miles east of Kojin, Kangwon-do. The boat is sunk and a crewman captured alive.

February 26 - Ten North Korean vessels intrude 23 miles southwest of Paengnyong-do in the western sea. One of them is sunk and nine others flee.

March 20 - The United Nations Command announces the discovery of the second North Korean tunnel beneath the truce line, and lodges a protest with the North Korean against the tunnel digging at a meeting of the Military Armistice Commission.

March 21 - Two North Korean Defectors - Kim Pu-sung assigned to the Workers' (Communist) Party Liaison Department and Yu Daeyun, a North Korean lieutenant - reveal that North Korea is digging tunnels across the truce line for invasion or infiltration routes.

April 29 - Two armed North Korean agents appear near Sokdae-dong, Pusan. One of the pair is caught on the same day in Pusan and the other in Seoul on May 3.

June 9 - Two North Korean MiG fighters intrude over Paengnyong-do in the western sea.

June 30 - Four or five North Korean guards assault a UNC security officer, Maj. William Henderson, and inflict serious injuries.

July 12 - A North Korean vessel infiltrates 20 miles northwest of Paengnyong-do in the western sea. When challenged by a South Korean gunboat, it flees to the north escorted by North Korean naval vessels which violated the truce line extension to come to its rescue.

August 26 - Two armed North Korean agents intrude near the Freedom Village in the southern sector of the Demilitarized Zone, and kidnapped one of its villagers.

September 11 - Several North Korean agents appear on the beach at Sangha-muon, Kochang-kun, Cholla-pukdo. One of the infiltrators is shot dead.

October 6 - A North Korean spy boat approaching a beach some 20 miles west of Taehuksan-do, Shinan-kun, Cholla-namdo is intercepted and sunk.

## **1976**

January 23 - Two Korean warplanes intrude over Paengnyong-do in the western sea.

April 7 - Two North Korean tanks intrude into the southern sector of the Demilitarized Zone.

June 19 - Three North Korean agents infiltrate a South Korean army area in the mid-eastern front line area. All of them are shot dead.

August 5 - A North Korean outpost shells a South Korean outpost across the Military Demarcation Line.

August 18 - About 30 axe and club wielding North Korean guards attack a group of UNC personnel supervising a tree pruning by workers in the Joint Security Area of Panmunjom, killing two American officers and injuring five KATUSA and four American servicemen.

## **1977**

June 3 - North Korean troops infiltrating the southern boundary of the Demilitarized Zone attack two South Korean patrols, killing one and wounding another.

July 14 - North Korean troops open fire at and bring down a U.S. Army CH-47 helicopter which crossed the Military Demarcation Line due to a navigational error. Of the four crewmen, three were

killed and the other injured. The dead and injured are turned over to UNC through Panmunjom two days later.

October 20 - North Korean troops kidnap a South Korean battalion commander and his signal man. The officer was supervising the routine repair of a demarcation marker in the Demilitarized Zone.

## **1978**

April 28 - A North Korean speed boat escorting infiltrating agents is intercepted and sunk near Komun-do, Namhae-kun. In the engagement, four crewmen of the North Korean ship are killed. One South Korean seaman is killed and four others are wounded.

October 27 - The United Nations Command announces the discovery of the third North Korean tunnel beneath the truce line 4 km southwest of Panmunjom.

November 27 - Three North Korean agents infiltrate the south and kill four civilians

## **1979**

July 21 - A North Korean armed spy boat is intercepted and sunk near Pojo-Do, Namhai-kun, six agents aboard are killed.

August 9 - National police smash 24-man spy ring operating in Samchok (east coast)

September 6 - North Korean agents attempt, but fail to kidnap three South Korean engineers in Pakistan

**1980**

January 26 - North Korean navy kidnap South Korean fishing boat Haewang-ho Nos. 6 and 7 at the high seas.

March 23 - Three North Korean armed agents are shot dead while infiltrating across the Han River.

March 25 - An infiltrating North Korean armed spy boat is sunk off Pohang.

March 27 - Three North Korean armed agents intrude 600 meters south of the Military Demarcation Line in the area of Kumhwa, Kangwo-do and fire on ROK soldiers killing one and wounding another.

June 21 - A North Korean spy ship intrudes into the west coast (Sosan). Of nine armed agents aboard, eight killed and one captured alive.

July 23 - Failed North Korean kidnapping attempt on a South Korean delegate to United Nations woman's conference in Copenhagen, Denmark.

September 8 - North Korean navy kidnaps a South Korean fishing boat, Namjin-ho.

November 3 - Unidentified number of North Korean armed agents infiltrates Hwengan-do, Wando-kun, in the southwestern sea. Three are killed.

December 2 - North Korean navy kidnaps South Korean Fishing boat, Taechang-ho on high seas.

December 2 - two of three North Korean infiltrators killed attempting to land at Mijo-ri, southern tip of Namhae island.

## **1981**

August 12 - Two North Korean MiG-21 planes, protected by about 10 fighters, infiltrate the air space of the Republic of Korea.

August 26 - North Korea fires an SA-2 surface-to-air missile at a U.S. SR-71 reconnaissance plane.

October 31 - North Korean troops open about 620 rounds of rifle and machine gun fire across the Military Demarcation Line in the 28th Division area.

**1982**

April 21 - North Korean troops fire about 100 rounds of 82 mm recoilless guns in the Demilitarized Zone 26 km north of Hwachon in the central sector.

May 15 - Two armed North Korean agents appear Kosung-kun, Kangwon-do, one shot dead.

June 7 - North Korean troops fire at a South Korean guard post 8 km northwest of Kojin in the eastern sector for eight minutes.

July 13 - A North Korean patrol boat hijacks "Masan-ho No. 5" and its crewmen engaged in fishing on eastern high seas.

**1983**

June 19 - ROK military intercept and kill three armed North Koreans infiltrating into the south.

October 9 - Four South Korean Ministers and twelve others die in bomb blast in Rangoon, Burma. South Korean president survives only because he arrived late.

December 3 - Two armed North Korean infiltrators captured near Pusan

**1984**

April 2 - Two South Koreans, Choi Eunhee and Shin Sanuok kidnapped by North Korean agents.

**1985**

October 20 - ROK Navy sinks North Korean Spy boat off the coast near Pusan.

**1986**

February 1-5 - Do Choe-Sung, 2nd Secretary of ROK embassy in Beirut is kidnapped, suspected ties to North Korea.

September 14 - A terrorist bomb explodes in Kimpo International Airport, suspected ties to North Korea.

**1987**

November 29 - KAL flight 858 from Baghdad to Seoul explodes, bomb planted by two North Korean agents.

**1992**

May 22 - Three North Korean infiltrators killed attempting to cross DMZ southern sector.

October 6 - North Korean spy ring rounded up, Worker's (Communist) Party of Korea.

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